



# Bullying Intervention Treatment Acceptability Ratings among Students with Disabilities

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<https://cehs.unl.edu/empowerment/>

## Introduction

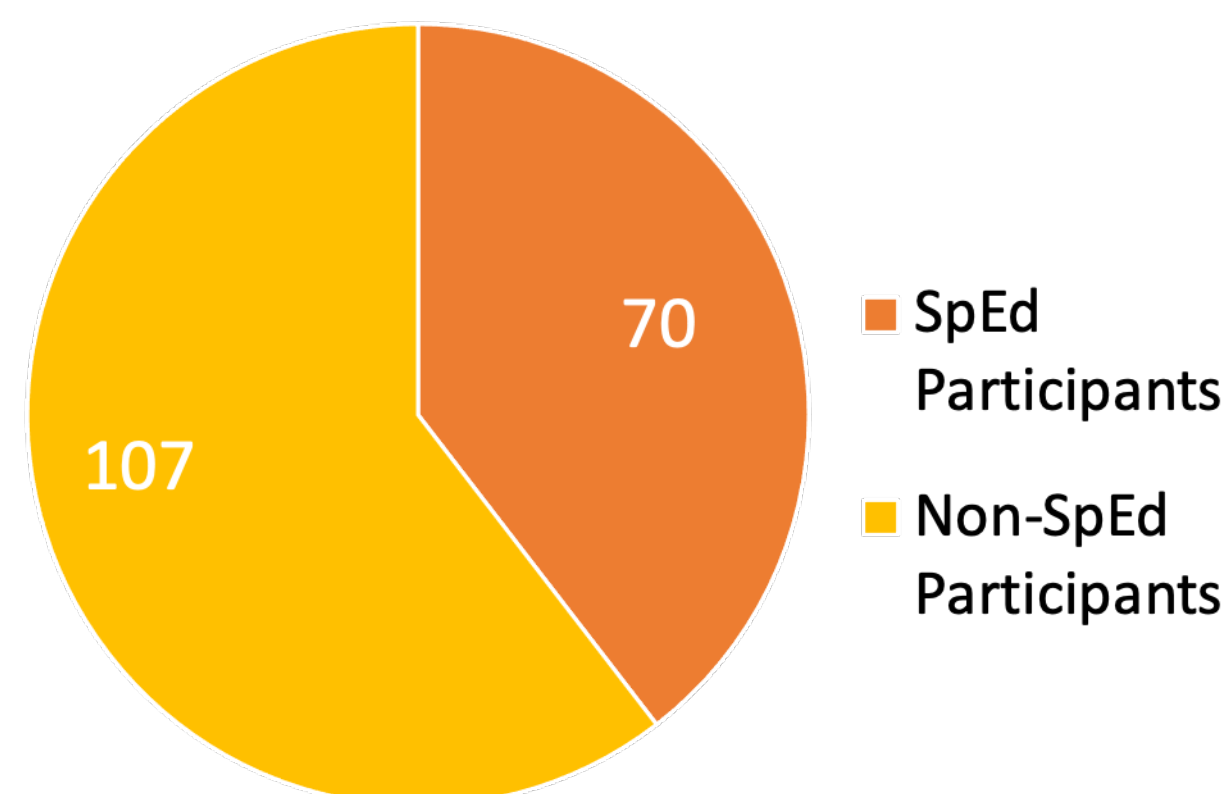
- Students with disabilities report higher rates of perpetration and victimization than their typically developing peers (Rose et al., 2009; Swearer et al., 2012; Singer, 2005).
- Traditional bullying programs have largely been ineffective for students with disabilities (Espelage et al., 2015); individualized programs are likely more effective for this population of students (Swearer et al., 2010).
- Treatment acceptability ratings and other environmental factors can influence the success of a bullying intervention (Nocentini et al., 2019).

### Research Questions:

- 1) Do treatment acceptability ratings of a Tier-III bullying intervention program differ between youth in special education and youth in general education?
- 2) Do environmental and personal factors (i.e. negative attitudes toward school and negative emotionality) associated with poorer intervention outcomes also predict treatment acceptability for students in special education?

## Method

**Procedures & Participants.** Data were collected from a larger study with youth involved in bullying from 2011 to 2019 via a Tier-III cognitive-behavioral intervention for bullying involvement. Participants were referred to the intervention after several office referrals for bullying others. Responses were collected from 177 participants (70 students in special education (SpEd); 107 students not in special education (Non-SpEd) ages 7 to 17 years.

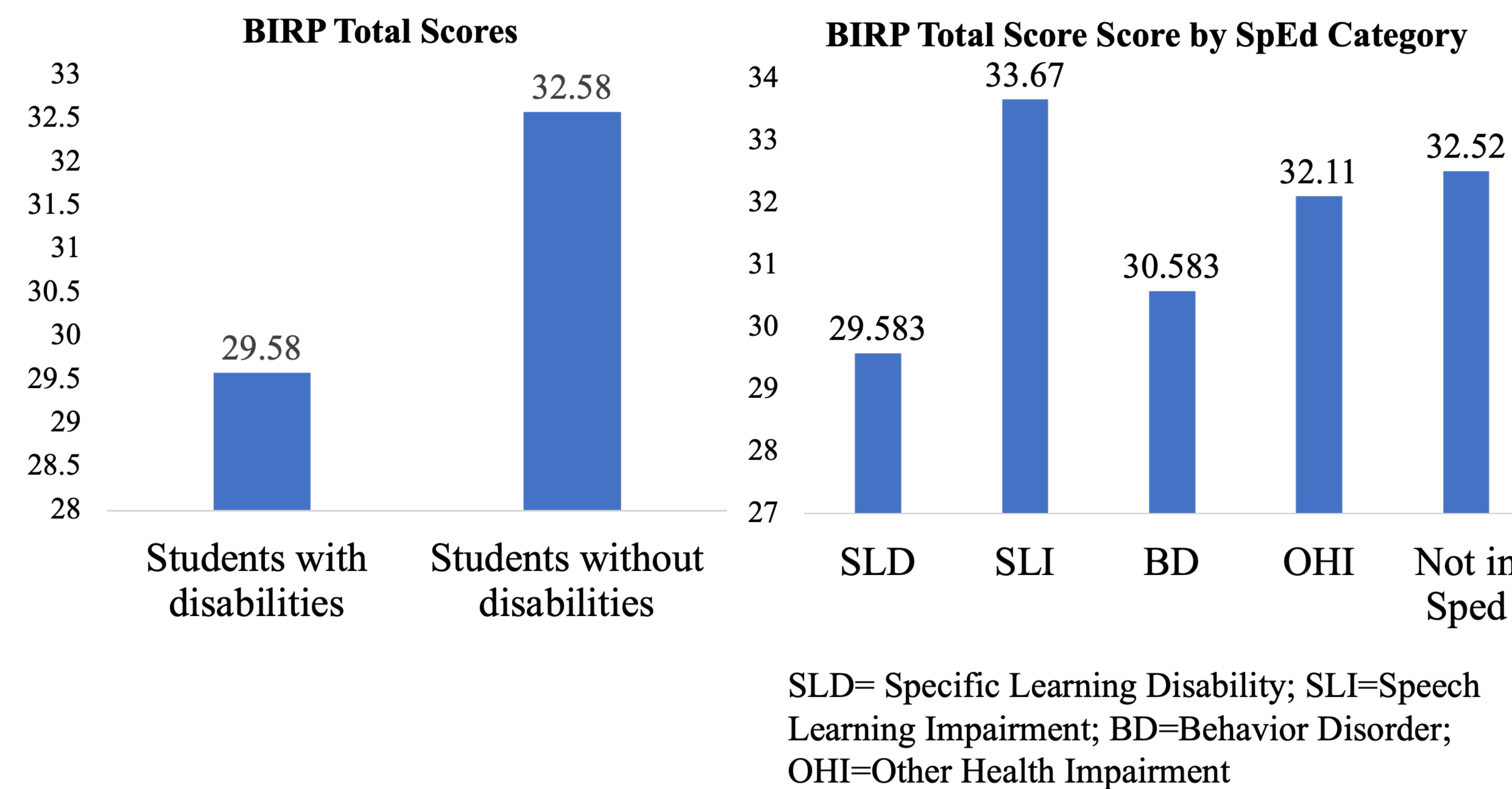


## Measures

- **Bullying Involvement Program Rating Profile (BIRP).** The instrument is adapted from Witt and Elliot's (1985) Children's Intervention Rating Profile (CIRP) (Witt & Elliot, 1985). The instrument asks individuals to rate the treatment acceptability of the intervention ( $\alpha = 0.68$ ).
- **Children's Depression Inventory (CDI).** The CDI is a 27-item self-report measure ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ) that assesses depressive symptoms in children. This measure demonstrates acceptable internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and convergent validity (Kovacs, 1992).
- **Thoughts about School- Student Version (TAS-S).** The TAS-S is a 34-item scale ( $\alpha = 0.63$ ) that measures students perceptions of their school climate.

## Results

- A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in treatment acceptability ratings between students in special education and students in general education. Students in special education were further separated based on their special education verification (i.e. specific learning disability, other health impairment, etc.).
- There was a statistically significant difference in treatment acceptability ratings between verification categories, ( $F(1,143) = 7.82, p = 0.006$ ). A Tukey post-hoc test revealed that students with a specific learning disability endorsed lower treatment acceptability ( $M = 29.58, SD = 1.07$ ) than students in general education ( $M = 32.58, SD = 0.34$ ). Other disability categories did not endorse lower treatment acceptability than students in general education.



## Results (cont.)

- A Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient was computed for each of the independent variables (depressive symptoms and attitudes toward school) and dependent variable (treatment acceptability).
- Within the SpEd sample, there were no significant correlations between depressive symptoms and treatment acceptability  $r(47) = -.05, p > 0.05$  nor attitudes toward school and treatment acceptability  $r(45) = .06, p > 0.05$ .

## Discussion

- The results indicated that students with disabilities, particularly those with a specific learning disability endorsed lower treatment acceptability ratings than students in general education. This suggests that students receiving special education services may require more tailored bullying intervention programming.
- Environmental and personal factors did not appear to impact treatment acceptability for students in special education. These factors may influence bullying intervention outcomes more than treatment acceptability ratings.
- This may also suggest that intervention components play a larger role in treatment acceptability. For instance, students with specific learning disabilities may dislike the large amount of reading involved in this intervention.
- These results highlight a continued need to understand bullying intervention outcomes for students in special education. Future research should focus on evaluating bullying intervention programming specifically geared toward students in special education.

## Bullying Resources for Students with Disabilities

- <https://www.stopbullying.gov/bullying/special-needs>
- <https://cehs.unl.edu/empowerment/resources/>
- <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/school-violence-resources/bullying-prevention>
- [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org)